

## National Family Caregiver Support Program Resources

### Care Receiving: Creating Partnerships in Self Care



#### Introduction

The relationship of the caregiver and care receiver has an important effect on the care process. A strong positive partnership between caregivers and care receivers can lessen caregiver stress and result in better quality-of-care for the care-receiver. Limited attention has been paid to the role of care receivers and the challenges they face in this role. Most of us fear losing our abilities for self-care and having to receive help from others. At various points in our lives we all need help and assistance.

#### Facing Feelings And Values

Most of us never thought we would be in a position to need help. It is important to acknowledge that while we now need assistance with our lives, we also have much to give. The following is advice on coping with the emotional components of receiving care:

- Allow yourself to accept the assistance of others.
- Accept assistance graciously. Frequent expressions of guilt make caregiving more difficult.
- Acknowledge feelings of guilt and/or anger at having to receive care. Don't allow these feelings to affect your relationship with your caregiver.
- Focus on the positive aspects of your life; on the things you can do.
- Keep your sense of humor
- Live in the present; focus on life now and what you are able to do. Celebrate accomplishments.
- Be creative in exploring and developing interests and activities that enhance your self esteem.
- Keep in frequent contact with friends.

#### Being An Effective Partner

All partnerships require give and take. The partnership you have with your caregiver requires active participation and compromise in order for it to be rewarding and enduring. Below are suggestions for creating a successful partnership:

- Do what you are able to do for yourself. Small efforts are recognized and appreciated.
- Provide moral support; listen to your caregiver.
- Have fun together. Share ideas. Be a good friend.
- Plan as much in advance as possible. Provide your caregiver as much advance notice as possible regarding doctor's appointments, etc.
- Accept help from other sources to give your caregiver needed time off.
- Compromise and problem solve with your caregiver.
- Look for things, small or large, that you can do for your caregiver or family.



## Communicating Well

Open, honest communication is essential to create and maintain a successful partnership. Below are strategies that current care receivers suggest:

- Listen to your caregiver's concerns. What are their joys, successes, and problems? What is going on in their lives?
- Be kind. Show affection. Express love.
- Express gratitude but don't overdo it.
- Speak up for yourself; make your needs known.
- Respect your caregiver's scheduling and time limitations.
- Be fully involved in decision-making about your care.

## Participating In Self-Care

You are the best source of knowledge about your own health. Participating in your self-care can be an important ingredient in maintaining positive feelings of independence.

- Learn new ways to function. Use mechanical devices such as walkers and wheelchairs to increase mobility.
- Learn as much as you can about your own emotional/physical condition.
- Participate in care by taking an active role with health care providers. Exercise and follow diet recommendations.

## Relating To Professional Caregivers

Partnerships with professional caregivers such as doctors, nurses, and social workers involve some of the same issues as partnerships with family or friends. There are also important differences. The following are suggestions for dealing effectively with professional caregivers and agencies:

- Learn all you can about your own physical and/or emotional situation: ask questions, read, attend classes. Do not hesitate to ask professionals to repeat or rephrase what they have said.
- Learn all you can about the beliefs and attitudes of the professional with whom you are dealing.
- Learn about service agencies and how to use them.
- Speak up for yourself. Be sure you understand what is being said.
- Don't hesitate to change doctors if you feel you are not receiving the care you need.
- Become an advocate for yourself and others in the same situation.
- Be persistent about your needs – don't give up.
- Two can be better than one when dealing with professional caregivers. Bring your caregiver or friend to appointments.
- Advocate for yourself with professional caregivers. Be assertive. Take the time you need to explain your problems.

*Information provided in this fact sheet was adapted from materials submitted by the Institute of Gerontology, University of Denver, Denver, CO.*

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